GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3705
ANSWERED ON:07.04.2003
FOREST LAND SCAM IN GUJARAT
VSM (RETD.) COL. CHOUDHARY

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the Rs.2000 crores forest land scam in Gujarat as reported in the Times of India dated February 12, 2003;

(b) if so, the details and the facts thereof;

(c) whether encroachment of over 60,000 acres of forest land comes under Badodra, Bharuch and Panchmahals districts only;

(d) if so, whether the Government propose to conduct survey of forest land encroachment in other district of Gujarat also;

(e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(f) the action taken by the Government against the guilty persons involved in the said land scam?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JU DEV)

(a) & (b) A news item had appeared in the national daily `The Times of India` dated: 12-2-2003, first para of which reads- `The Gujarat Forest Department has unearthed the scam in the State estimated at over Rs.2000 crores. It involves encroachment of over 60,000 acres of land belonging to sanctuaries, reserved forests and protected forests in the districts of Vadodara, Bharauch and Panchmahals `. Taking note of this, Central Government sought report from the State Government on 14-2-2003.

(c) to (e) The State Government has informed on 20-3-2003 that an area of about 36556.40 ha. has been reported under encroachment in different circles of the State.

(f) Government of Gujarat have informed that the State Government have constituted a District level Committee under the chairmanship of District Collector with District Superintendent of Police and Deputy Conservator of Forests as members to oversee the operation of removal of encroachments. Out of 36556.40 ha. encroached forest area, 14416.8585 ha. area has been evicted so far as on date 20-3-2003.

The Government of Gujarat have also constituted a State Level Committee under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary to monitor the situation regarding encroachment on forest lands. The Committee while monitoring the situation will also fix responsibility of field formations including the revenue officers for their failure to prevent /evict encroachment.